Sweat and Blood: Training to Take up the Cross

Alec Madrid, SMA 2016

Three days a week, we throw on our battle-crests and hurry up the road through the marked gate onto the fields of the “Legion’s Blood.” The time has come once again to soak the ground with our sweat and blood, while we struggle and strain to follow the huge example of a little priest whose dissected leg has given him all the frailty of an Abrams tank. For forty-five minutes we lift, lower, strain, and throw our trembling limbs over and under obstacles as we maneuver around our new battlefield playground that has enough toys to keep a Marine happy on Christmas. All is performed under the ever-present shadow of the cross, the sign of our blood-robed Commander.

For two thousand years, warriors have rallied to this sign. Among the first to do so were Maurice, the Roman commander of the Thebans, and his entire legion. When ordered to kill Christians and sacrifice to the gods of Rome, they refused. When his strongest would not bow before idols, the Emperor Maximian decimated them to the last man. Maximian unwittingly splattered his doorposts with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and it was only a matter of time before the Angel of Death passed over a newly consecrated Rome. The Nile ran red before Israel was set free, and the Tiber pumped the martyrs’ blood through Rome, the heart of Christendom. Maurice and his command had transfused their blood and very life into their country with one last act of valor, rendering to God what had been Caesar’s.

Seventeen hundred years later, a handful of this precious, blood-stained soil was smuggled out of Europe, across the Atlantic and sprinkled around our training field by priest and “drill sergeant” Fr. Bourbeau. A place of sacrifice, here the blood and sweat of Christian mixes with the seventeen hundred year old blood and sweat of Christian. Here, the goal is not an Olympian body (that’s just a bonus) but, as Fr. Rutledge explained to us during our first PE class, a soldier’s will to match that indomitable will which baptized Rome by blood. Like soldiers, we train our wills to give everything, every last ounce of strength, every last drop of blood for King and country.

We train like soldiers, because Christians are warriors, truly unlike any other. All Catholics, man or woman, weak or strong, are marked for war while most of us are still in diapers. The soldier may risk his life in combat with a terrorist, but the Catholic wrestles with “principalities and powers,” challenging the might and cunning of beings whose malice predates the creation of man. But our enemies were defeated once before and can be again, for He has conquered… (Psalm 68). All it takes is the will to fight, the wills we train three days a week on the field of the Legion’s Blood, so that we may rightly direct them each moment of our lives.
“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” – Matthew 5:16.

A Catholic, by the very fact that he is a Catholic, is obliged to strive for excellence. He is the light of the world, for he possesses within himself the grace by which he is like Christ, Who is the Light. As a “child of the Light,” he must stand out. He cannot be indistinguishable from the masses around him, for he shares the mission of Christ: to dispel the darkness of the world that knows not the Truth, Beauty, and Goodness of God.

As Catholics, we are called to greatness, and we long to shine and make a difference. Yet how often do we dread the unrelenting effort required and fear not fitting in. We are reluctant to pay the price, poor in generosity, and so, too often we languish in mediocrity and fail in our mission.

“The responsibility of a Catholic is to dare to distinguish himself,” says Father de Chivré. We are meant to draw souls to Christ, to the Church, to the Catholic way of life. And for that we must be models of excellence in every domain. We must pursue excellence with integrity, determination, fortitude, and genuine charity. “He does all things well!” the people said of Our Lord in amazement. So it should be said of us.

Advent is the time to renew our efforts in this regard, and the Blessed Virgin Mary is the one we should look to as our model. As one saint described her, she is “the living monstrance of Jesus.” Carrying the Light of the world in her womb, she radiated that Light in everything she did, in everything she said, in the spirit that animated her.

May we live Advent as did she!

Rev. Fr. Gerard Beck
Rector, St. Mary’s Academy and College

Over a thousand Catholics, adults and children, armed with rosaries, candles, and torches, marched into the night, singing hymns to Mary and praying her rosary. Their star-like lanterns, symbolic of their prayers, gleamed heavenward to God.
Conference on the Family: a Student’s Perspective

Catherine Janacaro, SMC 2017

For the students of St. Mary’s College, this year’s Angelus Press Conference topics—the sacredness of the family, the solemnity and beauty of parenting, and the self-sacrifice that marriage demands—were especially relevant, as we consider our future vocations.

Five speakers, starting with the District Superior, addressed the audience on the first day. The crowd was impressive—the conference room was packed—as Father Wegner explained how progression in love between spouses means a growing spirit of selflessness. The fruit of this selfless love is children, to whose formation both father and mother devote themselves. Father Beck’s conference emphasized the sacredness of this duty of formation. Referring to the family as the “temple of temples,” Father Beck compared the home to a church, where everything is centered on God, producing an atmosphere of beauty, joy, and confidence.

In such a home parents can strive with good hope to lift a child’s gaze and to form his heart. He reminded us that while the process of raising children necessarily entails sufferings, there are great rewards. Regarding the important mission of education, Miss Anne Marie Temple explained how the school aids parents in teaching children to view all things in light of the Divine Reality, God. Focusing on the primary and secondary ends of marriage, Father McFarland refuted prominent modern errors by presenting the true principles of marriage.

Father Rutledge then presented both the remote and proximate preparation for marriage, stressing that young people must possess physical, psychological, and spiritual maturity before they undertake the duties of matrimony.

Attending these conferences with many other young adults in a friendly, uplifting social atmosphere was enjoyable and edifying. The high school students at the conferences reminded me that there was a time, not long ago, when these issues seemed remote and more academic than practical to me. Now I realize how pertinent they are. The conferences led me to think seriously about the future, inspired with a deeper understanding of matrimony, the courage, maturity, self-sacrifice, and love that it requires.

Before a packed house, Fr. Gerard Beck, who has lectured many times on the family in the McCabe Lecture Series at the Academy, spoke at the Angelus Press conference about the nature of man and the family, the first of human societies.

Fr. Michael Goldade, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul in Kansas City, spoke on the Church as the model for the family. Fr. Goldade, SMA 1998, was one of five speakers connected to St. Mary’s Academy and College: Fr. Gerard Beck, the Rector of SMAC, Fr. John McFarland, and Fr. Patrick Rutledge, both principals and teachers, also spoke at the conference, and Mr. Andrew Clarendon, teacher of literature at the College and Academy, presented a slide show on Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin.
Student Achievements

When I go into the woods in autumn, I see white-tailed deer and squirrels gathering acorns and bearing them. The trees are bare, and the days are getting colder. When I go deeper into the woods, I see a bear hibernating as well as rabbits gathering food. The leaves of golden brown are on the ground, and ponds are starting to freeze.

Gregory Beaulieu, 3rd Grade

In autumn I love to rake up beautiful and colorful leaves, then run and jump in them. I just stand under the tree and let the leaves fall on me, and stand in the open and smell all the good and beautiful smells of the flowers and of the leaves. I will be very quiet to hear the wind in the leaves and the birds with their families.

Gianna Hatty, 2nd Grade

At the Rosary Procession, everyone was in a group on the Quad. Each family was its own little group. Then everyone began to light their candles, passing one flickering flame from person to person, from group to group. Finally, when every candle was lighted, the procession started. It first went past the college building, then over the bridge and through Mission Street.

Evan Bryan, 5th Grade

In fall I enjoy the crisp or warm autumn air that seems to always have wind blowing your hair as if to change it like the world around you. When I take a walk I see the trees with colors as if a rabbit dipped his paws in paint and hopped around the country. The grass has changed to a dry brown which tells the squirrels to run around for nuts, and the birds to fly south, stopping to rest on the way. When they stop, you can hear them for miles around, glad to let their wings rest. We have a patch of trees by our house, and when I walk under the colorful cape above me, I seem to be lost in the wonders of autumn. I see things I never have seen, like a bed of leaves with little flowers sleeping under covers, and I hear the leaves twirl in the wind like tiny bells singing the arrival of fall. Best of all, I like the colored scene of the world as a canvas and fall as the artist.

Bailey Wiemann, 5th Grade

Winter nights—the glazed apples, smoked chestnuts, and sizzling walnuts would perhaps have no value if we were not around the blazing fire on such a frigid night. The relatives, the food, the tales make up memories of infinite value and irreplaceable love of those freezing evenings. In fact one would lose himself in the stories (which in many of our opinions were just rumors) so that we couldn’t care less what the time was. Though they were rather terrifying, the tales brought us closer to the warmth of the blaze, and there was happiness in such terror. After these “tall tales” the night was rather joyous but also horrible because we could not get those ghostly fantasies out of our heads at night.

Gabriel Moser, 7th Grade

A diagram of a maple leaf by James Murphy, 5th Grade.

An illustration for Robert Louis Stevenson’s “The Hayloft” by Lilian Snyder, 2nd Grade.
In their art classes, the junior high boys have been working with illustrative value, with dark or low key grounds. They construct the image by adding high key or white media, or by scratching away the low key ground. Their themes are chivalry and knighthood. The picture on the left, by Anthony Serafin, 8th grade, was made on a scratch board. The picture on the right, by Nicholas Madrid, 8th grade, was created by adding a white media to a low key ground.

One of the preliminary assignments for the 9th and 10th grade girls was to draw the figure of Christ from the Abbey of Vézelay in Burgundy. The sketch above was drawn by Anne Serafin, SMA 2018.

The 5th grade boys built their own stained glass windows with clay frames. Marcel Hill made the stained glass above; James Murphy, the one on the left.
A Tribute to Mr. Herman Belderok

Isabella Childs, SMA 2018

Mr. William Dredger, SMC ’84, recalls that the late Mr. Herman Belderok, one of St. Mary’s founding fathers, was fond of saying “We don’t just teach the three R’s—reading, writing, and ‘rithmetic; we teach the five R’s, adding to the usual three religion and respect.” A leader at SMAC from the beginning, Mr. Belderok served as Business Manager, Headmaster, and teacher over the course of three decades. Mr. Belderok’s legacy continues today, for he lighted and passed on the torch of excellence, which we carry. The students and faculty of St. Mary’s Academy and College extend our condolences to Mr. Belderok’s family and our deep gratitude for his generous service. Mr. Herman Belderok, may you rest in peace.

Mr. Herman Belderok, a man of great erudition and many talents, a personal pilot for Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, Fr. Hector Bolduc, and other society priests, died on October 16, 2015. In 2002 Mr. Belderok set up and launched KSMK-LP 98.3, the Society’s first radio station.

The News in More than 1,000 Words

Before the high school boys ran the 2015 Crucible, Captain Goshgarian, a U.S. Navy SEAL, spoke to the boys on the need for camaraderie, to work together to win.

Over the relics of St. Maria Goretti, whose bones are encased in a wax statue made in her likeness, stands a Knight of the Holy Sepulcher, one of the remaining Catholic orders of knighthood. The Children of Mary, with several of the Society Sisters from St. Mary’s, travelled to Oklahoma City on November 9 to honor the saint’s relics. The relics of the Virgin-Martyr toured the eastern half of United States in “The Pilgrimage of Mercy.”

“Oh give me a home where the buffalo roam...” (State Song of Kansas). The third grade girls travelled to the Lazy Heart D Ranch near Westmorland to see and feed the mighty beasts that once roamed the vast western prairies.
In the middle of October, while 32 boys were wading through mud and creeks in the Crucible to win their right to wear their house ties, 34 girls were spending their afternoons in the _Probatio_, entertaining and caring for the elderly at the St. Marys Manor in order to earn the privilege of wearing their house bracelets.

Tim Fullerton, SMA 2014, a volunteer with the St. Marys Fire Department, donned his turn-out gear. He and his cousin Mark Campbell, SMA 2000 and SMC 2002, also a volunteer firefighter in St. Marys and a professional firefighter in Lawrence, explained the dangers of fire and taught fire preparedness to the students at the Academy.

Benedictine Sisters from France, visiting the Academy at the beginning of November, spoke with the young ladies about the monastic vocation. While they and Fr. Cyprian visited the girls’ school, Br. John the Baptist, an alumnus of the College, entertained the boys with juggling and balancing acts.

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Beauty Through the Eyes and into the Soul

Genevieve Archer, SMA 2018

Recently, when making a visit to the Chapel after school, I was impressed by the beauty of St. Jude’s Plaza, where abundant flowers bloom behind a freshly painted wrought iron border. Since then several other campus renovations have caught my eye, from the careful landscaping all over campus, especially around the prominent statue of Our Lady, to the new classrooms in both the Academy and College buildings.

Why is so much effort being put into making our campus beautiful? St. Thomas Aquinas said that beauty is *id quod visum placet*: “that which being seen pleases.” Beauty, therefore, produces a pleasing atmosphere, a pleasant environment, one conducive to elevating and forming souls. Beauty delights the intellect, for in the beautiful it glimpses a ray of the creative intelligence. The blooming flowers, ordered landscaping, and careful attention to the details of the physical place also signify the aims of our education, the blossoming souls of the students, growing in the knowledge of God, and in the order of His creation.

The administration, our parents, parishioners, and benefactors put great effort into beautifying the campus so that in an atmosphere of beauty we might learn to know and to seek Beauty itself and one day to attain it.